

Tape two, side A, Paul Kaufmann continuing my interview with Mr. Anton Berkovitz. Now, at the end of the last tape you mentioned that you're on your way to Moscow with photographs of about 20 other people to see if you could get them papers, and that you got on the train by bribing the engineer and the stationmaster with vodka.

He hide us on top of the electrician, electrical engineer, I had to give him a half a liter too. He hide us on top. It's like a loft. In the electrical compartment where the electricity got the train, because they take the electricity in the trains, they got a compartment there, where all the machines are for the electricity. There are batteries and everything, and he hired us right there until we got over to the inspection.

Then we come down. We sit down on the train. We arrived to Moscow. It took us almost four days to get to Moscow. And we arrived to Moscow, I had a family there, a Jewish family with their son. He was a Russian pilot in the army. He was shot down by the Germans and put in a camp, and he ran away. And he comes back to the Russian lines. They told him he is a spy, and they send him away for 10 years.

To Vorkuta.

To Vorkuta. And I met him there. And I told him what I want to do. So he gave me the address from his mother. His father was in a camp too. And I arrived to Moscow. We went to that family. And she give us a place to stay there until-- in the morning, I started off. I went first to the Romanian embassy, the Rumanisch embassy. I speak with Rumanisch then.

And I had my brother-in-law. He was at that time in the Rumanisch army. He was a major, a Communist already.

The man who married your sister?

Yeah.

They live in Israel now. And I thought, I'll have somewhere to mention somebody, maybe I'll have some. It didn't do any good. They told me they can take-- I should fill out papers. They'll send them to Bucharest. And when they come back they'll send me a passport. It's impossible. I never would get it because there is intercepted [NON-ENGLISH] over there. And it never would arrive.

If I don't get it personally, it's not worth it definitely. So I said I'll fill out the papers because I was there already. And so let's go to the Polish embassy. I'll be a Polack. I didn't succeed there either. I went away to the Hungarian embassy. I walked in, in the Hungarian embassy. And you know what they did. They filled. And it was a little walk to there. I come in. He said, yeah, fine. Sit down.

Here is the form. He said, how many? I told him we are 19 there, and nobody can get out from there. He said, let's wait until the ambassador comes in, and we'll see what we can do. We'll try to help you. And sitting there and talking to one of the secretaries walked by a guy my age. He stands up and looks and looks and looks at me.

I didn't know who is this. He was a courier in the Yugoslavian embassy in 1938, '39, and '40. And one night I met him in Budapest in a hotel we played rummy all night. I didn't recognize him. He recognized me.

He said, where are you from? I said in Sighet. He said, did you live in Budapest? I say, yeah.

Where you have been in 1938 during the European fair?

I said I was in Budapest. I stayed in this and this hotel. He said, you play rummy? I say, yeah. He said, you remember we played the room all night long? Then I-- after the years I went through, this is the last thing I thought.

That's like, eight, nine years before.

Yeah, so it's the last thing I thought. He said, you set down. You're not going to go out from here without a passport.

At 1 o'clock, the ambassador come in. He walked in. We'll make him some passports. It took 15 minutes after the ambassador come in. I got a passport for me, for my wife, and the other woman got a passport for her and for her husband. He took all the papers. He said, yes. Make them all passports. Here you got, meanwhile you got papers that they are Hungarian citizens. And let somebody come up not one time, just in two groups. And we'll give them 9, 10 passports at a time.

He said, when you walk out from the embassy, don't dare go nowhere to a private house. You'll be followed step by step by the NKVD. Go from here. Travel around for two or three hours, and then go to the train station. Sit down there. There they'll come and ask you for your papers. It was.

We got out from the embassy. They start following us. All the way, where we went. We stopped at an ice cream stand. In winter, their ice cream is a big--

They walked up and bought ice cream.

You knew who they were?

If I know somebody follow me, if I see him long enough around me, I know they follow me. We come to this, we went for the metro. It was there. We went out from the metro they changed hand us over for two ladies. And about six hours, we was going around, back and forth, going out, walking on the streets, looking.

You were with this girl who had smuggled the photographs in her clothes.

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. And she had the papers too what they gave me, for all 19. If they catch us, this is the end of us. So we walked around, walked around, finally, we got out to the station. As soon as we sit down, we don't took two minutes, two big come in there in uniform, and come up. [NON-ENGLISH], your papers. I take out the passport. She took out her passport.

Where you live? [NON-ENGLISH] They says, you leave right away the city. They say, I give you 24 hours. I said, don't give me 24 hours. Give me a ticket. It's impossible to get a ticket in Moscow, a train ticket.

Even to Vorkuta?

Nowhere. At that time, it was so much army still going and coming. The stations was jammed. They said, I cannot give you nothing. You find a way to get out from Moscow. If we catch you, we'll put you in jail. You have no right to be in Moscow.

Fine. So from there already, we was free. We know nobody will follow us. We went back to this lady. We slept over the night. The next day, we have to get a train ticket. I go back to the embassy. I say I cannot get no ticket. They said, we cannot do nothing. The Rumanisch embassy, they got connection to Intourist, the travel agency. They'll be able to get you tickets.

Even in 1946, they had those connections?

Yeah. So they will be able to give you tickets. I went back to the Romanian embassy. I said, listen, you took my documents, my papers. I want a ticket. I can't get no ticket. I need help.

They said, no problem. Now you have to wait three days.

They give us a letter to the Intourist. The Intourist give us a sleeping car all the way to Vorkuta. Only NKVD, what does it say? I'm a foreigner. I had a Hungarian passport. So you see, they didn't know. The Romanian embassy didn't know that I have a Hungarian passport. When I got to the Intourist they made us a ticket. We had to wait three days, and give

us a sleeping car.

Now we're going back. We have to get an exit visa.

From Moscow?

From Vorkuta, from Komi ASSR. You see this is Komi ASSR, Eskimo raion there.

Well, you mean, once you got back to Vorkuta, you had to get an exit visa to get out of Vorkuta.

Not from Vorkuta, to get out from the country. And I cannot get it, only there where I live. Moscow didn't have nothing to do with it. I talked to one of the militia. I said, yes, I said give us the passport. We'll send it away to Syktyvkar. This is the capital of Komi ASSR, Eskimo country. All Eskimos. And they'll send it to Moscow. And there.

I said, uh-uh. This don't sound too good. I'll never received that passport. I don't do that. I talked to that Vasiliev, to my inspector from the commerce department. Here I got a job. I cannot leave the job too. I have to be transferred somewhere where they don't know about me. So I got with him they transferred me over to a little town, by a steel factory. Also in our little canteen, there was the canteen was a friend of mine from near Sighet, from a little village, Davydovich. He was the manager there.

So they sent him to help. They send him. I hope this way I can get away. Nobody knows me there. Nobody look for me. And I got a paper from the employment office, a fake paper. I give two chunk of butter to the girl, and she made my paper. I'm transferred to Syktyvkar, from Vorkuta to Syktyvkar.

Is that nearby?

It's 1,000 kilometers.

But up north? It's still up north?

Yeah. And your wife too?

Yeah. All four of us, they transferred, so this other couple too. We come home together. Well I said, I'm not going to let you here. You will come with me. Because he didn't have no money. I had rubles. I didn't have what to do with him. So I told him, you will come with us. Where we'll sleep, you'll sleep. Where we'll stay, you'll stay.

And we got out, we come out to Kotlas back 600 miles south, and then back on the water, back north, there another direction. It's no train there. It's just water. And--

A river?

A river, yeah, a big river. In the wintertime, the truckers go through the ice. This is their road. And in the summertime is about two months. That's all it is. And finally, God helped us. We got to Syktyvkar. We got into Syktyvkar.

Where you go? I don't know. Nobody went in. It was a little like a motel. We went in there. We sit down. In the morning, I went into militsiya. I come in, sits a lady with a rank, I don't know if it was lieutenant or what, an Eskimo. She hardly speaks good Russian. And I showed her the passport. She don't know what this is. She never saw it.

This is a passport. I'm a foreigner. I need an exit visa. She went over to the inner ministerium, they got all this-- and she took the passport. Yeah, you have to order an exit visa stamp from Moscow. You don't have this. I ask her, how long does it take? I don't know. So we give her the two passports. She give us a receipt on them. And we stayed in the restaurant there-- I mean the motel, it was a restaurant, whatever they had we ate.

Where was this? Near the border with Finland then?

No, it's not. It's right in the tundras.

Still deep within Russia?

Oh it's deep in the North Pole. It's still the North Pole there. It's still the North Pole there with the Eskimos. And I start going every day. I had [NON-ENGLISH] I have no stamp this. It was already 14 15 days, and our visa is only-- if they give you a visa, they give you for 30 days. And to get to the border, it's another thing. So they give-- you start to go in one day, another day. Finally, I told my wife I said you got a little bottle already.

Why don't you-- I'll go with you and to the inner ministerium. We will ask to see the inner ministers. She comes there. Right away, they took her under--

With a gun.

With the gun with the bayonet on it. Like a criminal. And they got you, and she got you-- and she got-- and she come in. And he was very nice. And he said nothing can do until we get the stamp, Moscow. We get the stamp, I'll sign it, and you go. It was already 19 days, still nothing. I come into the office, to the Eskimo.

I told her, listen. I run out of money. I'll sleep here, all four of us and you'll have to feed us. I didn't need it. I just wanted to see if you can do anything. The poor thing, she cannot do nothing. She started crying. She said, look, I got one ruble in my pocket. What can I do? I cannot help you. And I cannot let you sleep here either.

I didn't mean that. So past 21, the 21st day. I walked in on the door. She jumped up with the stamp. She was happier than I was to get rid of us.

To get rid of you.

So they put out the stamp. Stamped, signed it. We got an exit visa. We got a visa for 21 days. If we're not out from the country from 21 days, we have to come back. How you get back the train station, to Kotlas? There's no buses, no nothing, no transportation, except army trucks.

I walked up to an army truck. There was the driver. Said, I want to go to Kotlas. And I'll pay you 100 ruble. Take us, the four of us. Look, I'm not going. The next truck is going to Kotlas. Talk to him.

So we paid him 200 ruble. He said only you can sit-in the back on the barrels. They had empty barrels, kerosene barrels, the steel barrels. On top of them you can sit. Do I have a choice? We sit on the barrels. We started to drive on that river on that ice. You know, it's already the beginning-- so the ice started getting--

What month was this?

This was already in March.

In March of '47?

Yeah, March or April. March. Yeah, this was end of March already.

1947?

'47, and my wife sit down on a barrel. I sit down on a barrel. And we start to go. And when start already, worn now that ice is started getting--

Cracking?

Not cracking.

Start to get mushy.

Mushy. And it starts to get holes, truck holes. Come in the middle of the night. My wife said, I'm losing the baby. I said, I cannot. I said you're not going to lose it. I sit down. And took it on my shoulders, grabbed her arm. And--

We arrived in the morning to Kotlas. We have a train already. We bought tickets to Moscow. We arrived to Kirov. We arrived to Kirov. We have to change trains. You go down. You can't even go in the station. The military laying on the floor. It's unbelievable. You can't go in. It's no train. I walk up to the [NON-ENGLISH] from the station. And he was drunk like a pig.

Yes. Give me a Russian [NON-ENGLISH] and walked away. I said, what are we doing? Standing outside in Kirov, still snow there. But it was good dressed. Staying with the baggage outside. It's no train.

I told my friend, I said, you know what, I had a lot of dealings with the [NON-ENGLISH], with the attorney generals. If we find the attorney general, he'll get us out from here. We're legitimate. We got a visa. We have to go. We start asking where is the attorney general's offices? The two girls were staying and watching the luggage. And the other the guy with me, we went away to attorney general.

He come out there. It was an old man, probably 80 years old, high ranked public, a five-star general. He smoked a pipe. The secretary told him. He said, let him come in. So I come in. And said, look. I got a passport. I got a pregnant wife. I have to leave because my visa will expire. Until we get to the border, my visa will expire. I have to come back. He said, go back and tell that I told you to tell the manager the first train to put you out.

Ah, the drunk, he said the same thing. So we went back to him, went back to attorney general and I told him what he said. He got angry and made him-- in the Russian you say [NON-ENGLISH], an order. He give him a written order. I want these people out with the first train. If not, you'll be responsible for it, and signed it. And it's no train. Here is our train come from Vladivostok. It's late, 14 hours it's late.

You're talking about luck. And when I come back, that train already in the station leaving. So also an army train, not civilians. When I showed them this paper, he stopped the train outside the station by the first stop. They stopped the train. And he ask a soldiers, officers, helped us to take the luggage and put us on that train.

In the train, there was no room to sit down even. It was a nice Russian officer got up and gave for my wife the seat. And we got to Moscow. We got to Moscow. Where we go? We're going to the Hungarian embassy. We went to the Hungarian embassy. Yes, fine. Except they took my arms. They said, you sleep here until we get you a train to the border, to the Hungarian border or to Budapest.

We'll give you-- here, you'll sleep here. You'll eat here. Don't worry. And we'll give you tickets. We'll pay for the tickets. I didn't have much money left already, because I know they'll take care of it. All right. Much money, I didn't thought we'll need much money. Whatever I had, I had 100 rubles left when we arrived to Moscow, or 200 rubles.

They give us-- they treated us like human beings there. Then three days later, we had a train, an army train. We went direct from Moscow to Budapest. They got a ticket on that train, and we arrived to Mukacevo the first night the first Seder, Pesach. My wife was ready at eight months there. And come to Munkacs. There the train stays four hours. So we went down from the train, went into Munkacs. We looked up a family there. But they were still in Vorkuta. This couple is in Montreal.

He was waiting for their passport. All of them got out. All of them got their passports. And we went to visit them. When we come back to the train, we arrived to the border in Chop. There everybody have to go down. That's what you think, to stay in the train, they'll come control the train, check you and you go. Everybody have to go down.

This is in Munkacs?

Not in Munkacs. This is Chop.

Chop, oh another town.

Chop, this is already the border, the border town. One half is Hungary and half is Russian. We arrived there. As soon as we get down the train, I go show for the guard the passports. He took us again, sit us down in a corner, took the passport from us. No, we have to have listen, that you don't take our passports away.

Because this is a Russian soldier?

Sure, but it was happen a lot of them come to the border. And they took their passports, and they never made it out. They send them back to the other camp. So they hold us about 45 minutes under bayonets. Don't move. Finally, they come out and give us the passports back. So, you're free. You can go on that train. We go up on the train. Here comes the customs.

He comes up, asked and said, do you have any money?

I said, yeah, I got 100 ruble. You cannot take it out. I said you got it.

Take it. No, you have to go spend it. You go down in Chop, you couldn't spend it if you want to spend it. You wouldn't have nothing to buy, not a pack of cigarettes in the whole station. I walk around and look. My wife is on the train with the luggage. They start blowing the whistle. The train is leaving. I want to go up on the train. They don't let me go up on the train. Right with a bayonet to your stomach. You're not going to go up. And the train is-- she don't have no passport. I have the passport.

And I start running, almost crying. Finally, I find one of the officers from the passport office. I showed him. When he got me to the train, the train was already rolling. I jumped up on the train and we arrived to Budapest. It was the second day of Pesach 1947.

So we went to the Joint Distribution Committee. They right away give us shelter and different clothes. I mean I had-- my wife had only heavy clothes. And a month later, our daughter was born. Thank God. And from there, I stayed. I want to go back to Romania to see my sister was already home with her husband from the camps. They was living in Romania then.

How did you know that? How did you know that?

From Budapest, I know already because my brother-in-law had a sister. I find her. I mean I know Budapest from before. So I know where to go for information. I know my sister is home already. She's alive, and my brother-in-law. And I wrote a letter. She said, come home. I said, uh-uh. No such a thing. I'm not going. Come visit with your wife.

I said, no. I know my wife, soft-hearted she is. She'll talk her over and I'll be stuck there. So I want to go further. I don't want to stay here. I have enough with the Russians. From 10,000 miles away, I don't want to see.

How did you feel about getting to Budapest? That was also under--

No, this was one of the best-- it was was nothing. I mean it's-- we didn't know that. I didn't know that what happened to Budapest that much. I know already something had happened in Germany. I know my mother and my both sisters was somewhere in Germany. I didn't know. I didn't know my mother don't live, until I got to Budapest.

You didn't know about Auschwitz or the extermination camps or anything?

No. No, no.

You knew nothing until you got to Budapest.

No, nothing. Nothing until I got to Budapest.

And then there was still a remnant. Half of the Budapest community was already killed. They were taken.

Yeah, sure. I mean it was gone. I mean we didn't know. So I come to Budapest. And I went to an ambassador, to the Rumanisch ambassador. I said, I want to go to Romania. He told me, so I say if you want to go, don't go with Rumanisch people. Because I know he was an attorney from Sighet. He was the ambassador, Tito.

It was the whole story is like everywhere I went, I find somebody to help me. So I went back in Budapest to the Hungarians. I want to renew my passport. Because that passport was good only Moscow Budapest, one way. I want out. I'm a Hungarian citizen. If I got a passport, I'm a Hungarian citizen. I want a passport to go to Romania. They didn't make much-- so they give me a passport. I went to Romania. I stayed five days, visit my sister. I ask her you want to come out? I'll rent something. You come to Budapest. We'll go together.

No we cannot go. She was at that time managing a hospital, and the people needed. It was--

The other sister was not there, just the one sister?

One sister had left. And she survived in Bergen-Belsen, [NON-ENGLISH]. And she was already outside on the pile with the dead ones. The next day it was liberated. And the girls told her that some people still alive on that pile. And they took her out. And thank God, she's alive. She's the only one left.

And then we stayed in Austria. I start--

Then you left Budapest, then went to Austria?

Yeah. From Budapest, I didn't want to stay in Budapest. I was waiting till the child to be at least six months, I give him six months to be able. We have to go back the border, walking through the fields.

With a child?

With a child, it have to be at least six months to be able to take that journey. And we were in Budapest. I always find my way, made a few bucks here, a few bucks there. And we left. And right after Yom Kippur, we went to the border. And there we got a group. And we walked. We went over the border. We're walking all night. I had two suitcases on my shoulders and my wife had a baby.

And halfway she said, Anton, I cannot carry the baby. My back is killing me. I cannot. I'll sit down. I said, you're not going to sit down. I'll throw the suitcases away, and I'll take the baby. So the next morning we arrived to Vienna to Rothschildspital. There was the Joint Distribution Committee's camp. I mean all the refugees first they come. And from there whoever stayed there first until warms up, and then we arrived to Budapest in the morning.

Vienna?

I mean to Vienna. We arrived to Vienna. We didn't have a diaper to change the child. There was nothing. You couldn't get nothing in Vienna a that time. A pair of shoelaces you couldn't get in 1947.

I had \$10 to my name. Well, in Hungary, \$10 was a lot of money in Hungarian money. You come over to Austria, it was \$10 was not much. I managed. So I told my wife. I said, listen no way I can do anything. I'll find out what's going on. I heard they told me in Bratislava, it's plenty food and plenty anything you want. You just have to go there and get it.

So how you go? It's a border. I find another Berkovitz, not a relative, just another Berkovitz who was also coming from Russia. I said, do you want to go to Bratislava? He said, yeah. So we'll bring something from there. So we come. We

went to the border. I had at that time, I had still a Russian-- a leather coat, a long one with a Russian cap, with boots. We all got dressed in. We come to the borders singing a Russian song. For the bridge, and we give him good wishes. [RUSSIAN]. Go.

Without papers?

Without papers or nothing. I had a piece of Russian paper from the-- it was nothing just a piece of paper in Russian. It was a fiasco. Look, I'm transferred from Russia. And we got into Bratislava. I went into the temple. There I find somebody to change me the \$10. I bought two suitcases. I filled up with the \$10 diapers, salami, sardines, whatever I could find I packed in the two suitcases.

And two days later, the Bricha was coming back. It's a transport to Vienna from Czechoslovakia. They took us back to Vienna. I come back to Vienna. Then I start--

No trouble getting across the border with the Russians there?

No. We was coming with the Russian officers. I mean we paid them off. And they stayed on the truck outside to go to the border. And I come to Vienna back. I mean, I sold some of the stuff I had already I made about \$100 together. So I'm already a rich man. I got \$100. I start to do some business. I start off a business.

Six months later, I had to build up a business, thousands of dollars-- coffee, sugar, and chocolate, Cadbury chocolate. They used to come in from the American zone. And in Vienna, there was nothing. And so we moved out from the Rothschild. I got my wife with the child over to Linz in the American zone. We had an apartment there. And I figured, until I get somewhere to go, at least I'll make some money. I have a chance. And I build up a pretty good business in Austria then.

You dealt with the Austrian Viennese population then?

Yeah. With the Austrian people, I mean the German I know. I mean I know Vienna from before, from before the war.

How did you find them? Was there any reaction to you or--

No. They didn't know me. I mean it's not the people who know me, just business people. I went in a deli stores or candy stores. And say you want to buy chocolate? I got chocolate for sale. Yeah. cocoa or anything, coffee. This was diamonds. You couldn't get it in Austria. Because they didn't have the foreign currencies.

And then I took my Hungarian passport. It was expired. And we put a French visa on it, a bogus. I got a transit visa to Switzerland. And so I was traveling.

So you went across the border. No. What I mean is the war was over. There must have been many Nazis left in Austria. Did they--

Yeah, at that time everybody was fine. Just give him that he can make a living. Just it was no mention anything had happened, like never happened.

It never happened.

Like never happened. Then we moved from Vienna-- from Linz we moved to Wels. In Wels, I find out that a lot of people when there was the dead march, in Austria when they walked in, some of them they couldn't walk. They just shot him on the road and buried them right there by the road.

We find that out and we created a committee. It was 12 of us going from village to village to find-- We come to Gunskirchen, they have the mass graves, not far from Mauthausen. I find a farmer. He told me, there outside the cemetery by the wall, lays somebody. He's buried in a box.



We went, and I'll show you a picture of it. We went in with authorities, with a doctor. I mean we got for examination. And we took that body out it was [PERSONAL NAME] from Bleier. I was with him. He was older and I. And I know him like I know the son. We brought him into Wels. We buried him in a Jewish cemetery. Then we start looking for more.

We find in one grave, they told us it's three people there buried. We opened up that grave. We find six people and one child. We brought them into the Wels. And then we got to Mauthausen, the group, and brought the ashes from the crematorium, and brought it to Linz, and there they put it in containers.

Wiesenthal was there. And I made a burial. And I sent it to Israel. I got pictures of it too. And after that, we lived in Wels until 19--

Wels?

Wels, Austria.

W-E-L-S?

Wels, it's between Salzburg and Linz. And there my son was born in Wels. And I started looking for a way to get out-- Australia.

This was what? 1948, '59?

That was already in '50.

'50?

'50. This was already in 1950. I start to get in contact with Australia, Brazil. Well, this friend who is in New York now, that [NON-ENGLISH] who was saved from with the Germans from the camp, he was in Brazil already. So I got in contact with him. And he said he'll send me papers. Matter of fact, he sent me already for a visa, if I had the passport. And then my wife said, I got family in New York.

My mother's two sisters. I got mother's brothers. I said, let's write a letter. I said, who you know? Where you write a letter? You have no address, nothing. We sit, and we went to a restaurant in Wels. And we sit there and. We talk. There's sitting another three young men there. I heard him talk something. He got cousins in America.

I walked up to him. I said, where in Brooklyn? Where in Brooklyn? In South 9th street. I didn't know where they live. I said, can you ask your uncle if they know the family [NON-ENGLISH]. So they write him. Three weeks later, they got a letter. They know them. They live right in the neighborhood, my wife's uncle and the aunt.

So we wrote them a letter. He was very happy. He said, come to America. Come to America. So I wasn't home. I left, I went I went to the Schweiz. And some people went to register at that time with the HIAS for America. And my wife went to register too. And she said she want to go to America. She haven't got nobody from the family, nobody left. We'll go with Australia to this. Now, she wants to meet her aunts and uncles and her cousins. I said, fine. We'll go to America.

And I start working on it. And in 1951, in December the 4th, we arrived to the United States.

It was in New York City then?

Actually, I had papers a contract to Ogden, Utah. I had somebody send an affidavit. I mean, the HIAS, you see the highest had everybody--

They try to route you somewhere.

Yeah, somewhere. Because I didn't want uncle or the tante I always was family is fine to [NON-ENGLISH], to eat dinner with them. To help me--

You want to be independent.

I don't want to owe him nothing. So they sent me papers from Ogden, Utah to come. When I arrived to New York. I said, I'm not going. I had already then a friend. He has passed away. He lived in Glens Falls, also a refugee. He was my partner. He come a year before me. And he lived in Glens Falls, New York. And she waited when we arrived. She said, don't go nowhere. Come to us. There you cannot go. The HIAS, you cannot just take off, I mean and say we are disappeared. You do it on the official way.

So the HIAS start to threaten me. If I don't go to Utah, they send me back to Germany. I said, you do what you want. I got my two children here, and my wife. Nobody will send me nowhere. I'm not in Germany or Russia. They said you must go. I'm in the United States. And we come. We come to visit the uncle. We stayed there. One night we stayed by the aunt. We stayed there. And he was happy to see us and happy to see us go too.

And we left for Glens Falls, a friend there, the Jewish community accepted us very well. And we stayed. We went right away I went to work in a factory to learn English. I went. I worked daytime I worked in a factory. In the night I went to school. And we lived nine months we lived in Glens Falls. We moved into New York. If I can't speak already little English, I went to got me a driver's license. I bought me a car. I bought me a little fruit market in Williamsburg, between all the Hasidim, and made a living. It was fine.

From there I went, and bought a poultry farm in New Jersey. That didn't work too hot. Went broke in the poultry farm. Then I had some friends in Indianapolis, also a former partner of mine from home. He was already there. And he finds a cousin, or an uncle. He had 12 supermarkets in Indianapolis. And he gave him a job. He told me, he say, you want to come here? You'll get a job here.

I said, fine. Don't make any difference. I want to start somewhere a new life. I went broke in the farm. So I moved down to Indianapolis.

What year are you talking about now?

This was in 60-- let's see from '51 we arrived. We stayed a year in Glens Falls. Then we stayed two years on the farm. That's '53, so '55. '55. In '55, we moved to Indianapolis. In Indianapolis, I got a job. Meanwhile, he sold the stores, the guy who owned the stores. I become a supervisor. And I worked for eight years. Then I went to my own, moved to Chicago bought a store in Chicago.

We went to vacation to Canada. On the way back, I stopped. I find a store. I bought it.

You mean a supermarket?

Supermarket, in Chicago. I struggled for a while. And then got I had three stores at one time in Chicago. And then she got sick. Doctor told me she had to have a warm climate. So I have to sell the stores. So

[AUDIO OUT]

Anton Berkovitz. And so you got your own supermarket in Chicago. And then you had three of them.

Yeah. But that didn't work out. I sold that.

Your wife needed a warm climate, so you came to Florida.

I come to Florida. I sold there the stores. I come to Florida. And I find here in Liberty City, I find a store. I bought it. I

kept it for 15 years, 14 or 15. 15 years.

Grocery store also?

A supermarket. Called Earl's Market. It's still there. And I had it until three years ago. I sold it. Three years ago I sold it. Then I went in the restaurant business, sold that too. Now I'm semi-retired.

So--

The children got married.

I want to ask you about those. What are your children doing?

My son lives here. He's a CPA. He got an office in Broward. He got three boys. There they are. That's my son with his wife next to him. There is our daughter with her family, with her husband. She got already daughter in third year in college. Her son is graduating now from high school. And thanks God that she should be healthy. Now I've got a problem. She's sick.

This is the life.

It's life. Well, are there any questions that I haven't asked you, Mr. Berkovitz? Any questions I haven't asked you that you'd like to talk about?

Well, it's a lot of talking, some of them too emotional.

Well suppose you were talking to a group of high school young people, or college people, or just a general audience. What would you have to tell them about this whole period of world history and your own life?

I mean it's the way it is, I could tell them. If it's be to be alive. I was twice. One story I didn't tell you. I mean I almost got killed also, three of my co-workers got killed. I survived.

In the coal mine?

In the coal mine. I survived. And you have to be what I say determined. You want to go through something. If you get in, in a jam or somewhere, you have to be determined that you do it, you'll make it.

You have to have a strong--

A strong will. You have to have a will to live and to survive.

And those who did not?

Who did not, they didn't survive. They was in the beginning from the first year, until the end, they started just fell like flies. And that's it. I mean one thing we have to fight and see that it never happens again.

Well it's one of the reasons that we try to get as many accounts as we can, so that this will be on record.

Yes. I mean we went through for our children and grandchildren great grandchildren. It's enough. I'll show you the pictures from the examination from that.

[AUDIO OUT]

It's like it's everything to have pictures.

This is my friend, between the two I went over.

When you were up, up at Vorkuta with?

Yeah, but away, he run away. He lives in Winnipeg.

Well, I want to thank you very much for your time, Mr. Berkovitz, and you'll get copies of these tapes. It will some weeks.

Yeah, my wife got some.

Well, you'll get copies of these too.

I know she had some. She got some too.

And I want to thank you because it's a valuable contribution to the work we do.

No, I'm making-- I'm making tapes for the children. Well, you'll have these too. Yeah, I made them already. And I make them, I'm writing the whole story up.

You are writing?

Yeah.

Did your children-- did you discuss this with your children when they were young?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Oh, yeah, especially my son. He's very interested. He's very--

OK. I think we'll end the tape here then. Thank you, again.

You're welcome.

This has been Paul Kaufmann interviewing Mr. Anton Berkovitz. About his experiences as a survivor of the Nazi Holocaust. This interview will be included as a valuable contribution to the oral history library of the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, Incorporated.